

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SIL-01 LAB-06 EB-11 DRC-01 /119 W

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R 191832Z APR 74

FM AMCONSUL BELFAST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 641

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

USNAVCOMMSTA LONDON DERRY

UNCLAS BELFAST 045

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT UK (NI)

SUBJECT: VISIT OF PM WILSON

SUMMARY: BRITISH PRIME MINISTER WILSON VISITED NI APRIL 18 TO REAFFIRM HMG SUPPORT FOR NI SECRETARY REES SECURITY FORCES POWER-SHARING EXECUTIVE AND SUNNINGDALE. HE EMPHASIZED NEED TO MAKE SUNNINGDALE A REALITY BUT WOULD NOT BE PINNED ON DATE FOR FORMAL RATIFICATION CONFERENCE. HE PAINTED GLOOMY PICTURE OF CONSEQUENCES OF FAILURE OF POWER-SHARING AND DID NOT WANT EVEN TO THINK ABOUT IDEA OF TOTAL INTEGRATION. FAULKNER AND NAPIER WERE REASSURED BY WILSON'S EXPRESSED DETERMINATION TO OPPOSE TERRORISTS. SDLP WAS REPORTED BY PRESS TO BE UNHAPPY AT WILSON'S REFUSAL TO BE PINNED DOWN ON RATIFICATION OF SUNNINGDALE OR PHASING OUT OF DETENTION. LOYALISTS WERE PREOCCUPIED WITH SIMULTANEOUS VISIT OF ENOCH POWELL. END SUMMARY

1. BRITISH PRIME MINISTER HAROLD WILSON PAID WHIRLWIND VISIT TO NI ON APRIL 18 TALKING WITH SECURITY CHIEFS, NI ADMINISTRATION AND TRADE UNIONISTS. HE TOLD PRESS CONFERENCE HE HAD COME TO EXPRESS SUPPORT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND SECRETARY REES AND HIS RECENT POLICY STATEMENTS, SECURITY FORCES IN THEIR EFFORTS TO COUNTER VIOLENCE, POWER-SHARING EXECUTIVE AND UNCLASSIFIED

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SUNNINGDALE AGREEMENT.

2. IN PRESS CONFERENCE AND TV INTERVIEW WILSON EMPHASIZED IMPORTANCE OF MAKING SUNNINGDALE "A REALITY" THROUGH FULFILLMENT OF COMMITMENTS BY ALL PARTIES, DE-EMPHASIZED IMPORTANCE OF SETTING SPECIFIC DATE FOR FORMAL RATIFICATION CONFERENCE AND DID NOT RULE OUT SOME CHANGES BY FURTHER AGREEMENT OF PARTIES CONCERNED. IN RESPONSE TO MANY QUESTIONS ON ALTERNATIVE TO POWER-SHARING EXECUTIVE HE WARNED THAT ITS FAILURE WOULD PLUNGE NI INTO "CONSTITUTIONAL ABYSS" TO WHICH NO QUICK AND EASY SOLUTION WOULD BE POSSIBLE. HE CHARACTERIZED IDEA OF TOTAL INTEGRATION OF NI WITHIN UK AS HYPOTHETICAL NIGHTMARE WHICH HE DID NOT WISH TO DEAL WITH WHEN HE ALREADY HAD ENOUGH REAL PROBLEMS ON HIS PLATE. WILSON WARNED HE COULD NOT PROMISE FULL SUPPORT FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF EXECUTIVES SOCIAL ECONOMIC POLICIES IN VIEW OF BUDGETARY STRINGENCIES. HE HAD NOTHING NEW ON PHASING OUT OF DETENTION OR TRANSFER OF PRICE SISTERS TO IRELAND.

3. CHIEF EXECUTIVE BRIAN FAULKNER AND ALLIANCE PARTY LEADER OLIVER HANIER WERE HAPPY ABOUT WILSON'S VISIT WHICH REASSURED THEM ABOUT HMG'S DETERMINATION TO OPPOSE AND NOT NEGOTIATE WITH MEN OF VIOLENCE. (UNIONIST) NEWS LETTER SPECULATED THAT SOME NEW SECURITY MEASURES MIGHT BE ANNOUNCED FOLLOWING WILSON'S TALKS WITH SECURITY CHIEFS IN NI.

4. SDLP LEADERSHIP PROFESSED ITSELF HAPPY WITH WILSON'S VISIT BUT (CATHOLIC) IRISH NEWS REPORTED SDLP WAS UNHAPPY AT FAILURE TO GET FIRM COMMITMENT ON DATE FOR FORMAL RATIFICATION OF SUNNINGDALE AGREEMENT OR PROGRESS ON PHASING OUT DETENTION.

5. LOYALISTS WERE GENERALLY CRITICAL OF WILSON'S BACKING OF POWER-SHARING AND SUNNINGDALE BUT THEY WERE PREOCCUPIED BY COINCIDENTAL VISIT OF ENOCH POWELL.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MINISTERIAL VISITS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 APR 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974BELFAS00045
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740092-0492
From: BELFAST
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740431/aaaabaxn.tel
Line Count: 95
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: garlanwa
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 SEP 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 SEP 2002 by BryanSD>; APPROVED <02 JAN 2003 by garlanwa>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VISIT OF PM WILSON SUMMARY: BRITISH PRIME MINISTER WILSON VISITED NI APRIL 18 TO
TAGS: PINT, UK, (REES), (WILSON), (SUNNINGDALE)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005